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News Release

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Share! #Durham announces @DurhamPoliceNC chief finalists; residents asked to submit questions for April 6 forum

Durham Announces Police Chief Candidate Finalists

Community Forum for Residents to Meet Finalists April 6; Residents Encouraged to Submit Questions

DURHAM, N.C. – Following a three-month search, City Manager Tom Bonfield has announced the two finalists for the police chief position of the [Durham Police Department](#).

“The search has been a very deliberate process to recruit and identify the very best person to be Durham’s next Chief of Police, and I’m confident that we’ve selected two extremely strong and capable candidates,” Bonfield said. “I look forward to introducing them and receiving public feedback as the next step of this process.”

The finalists are [Deputy Chief Cerelyn J. Davis](#), who serves over the Strategy and Special Projects Division of the [City of Atlanta Police Department](#), and Major Michael J. Smathers, who oversees the Field Services Group of the [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department](#).

As deputy chief, Davis oversees several units including Staff Inspections, Project Management, Public Affairs, Atlanta Retired Police Reserve, Community Liaison, Planning and Research Accreditation, Crime Analysis, and Video Integration. Over the course of her 28-year career with the department, she has held the ranks of patrol officer, detective, and sergeant.

As a lieutenant, Davis served as the personnel commander, public affairs manager, and executive assistant to the Chief of Police. She was also appointed as the commander of the department’s Homeland Security Unit. Additional responsibilities included overseeing the Intelligence and Organized Crime Unit, Gun and Gang Unit, Cyber Crimes Unit, Tactical Equipment Unit, and all satellite investigators assigned to the DEA, FBI, ATF, and the Joint Terrorism Task Force. While serving as the department’s emergency preparedness coordinator, Davis partnered with agencies such as the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Anti-Defamation League, local consulates, and the State of Georgia.



Deputy Chief Cerelyn Davis
City of Atlanta
Police Department

Davis has also served as the commander of the Special Enforcement Section, which included Homeland Security, Narcotics, Vice, Licenses and Permits, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Project Safe Neighborhood, Weed and Seed, Human Trafficking, and the now disbanded Red Dog Unit. As a major, Davis served as the commander of the Office of Professional Standards, assistant commander at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport Precinct, project manager for the department's Community-Oriented Policing Section, and project manager in the Office of the Mayor.

Davis also was one of eight women from across the country recognized in 2015 for their significant contribution to public service by "O" magazine, and was selected from over 3,000 applicants to participate in the "O" Whitehouse Leadership Project. To view her résumé, visit the [City's website](#).

A major with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD), Smathers currently oversees the Field Services Group consisting of three divisions and approximately 315 police officers. Since 1994, Smathers has served in almost every section and division in the CMPD including uniform patrol, criminal investigations, SWAT, police training, supervision of patrol officers, and supervision of the armed robbery/sexual assault unit, support services including purchasing, evidence and property control, and accreditation.

While serving as captain of the Charlotte Eastway Patrol Division, one of the most ethnically diverse assignments in the city, Smathers received a Chief's Community Policing award for his leadership and the division's achievement of reducing crime, including closing a crime-plagued hotel, while successfully managing two federal crime fighting grants. During this time, he also served as the commander of the Crisis Negotiation Team and commanded a Mobile Field Force Platoon during the Democratic National Convention in 2012.



Major Michael Smathers
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Police Department

Smathers has extensive experience in Investigations from commanding the Robbery/Sexual Assault Units where he achieved significant case clearance increases along with advancing cold case investigations while being a Chief's Unit Citation recipient. As major, Smathers led the entire Criminal Investigations Bureau commanding the investigation of all violent felonies. Under his leadership the homicide clearance rate was 81 percent, far exceeding the national average.

Since 2008, Smathers has been active with the National Innocence Project, providing technical assistance to law enforcement agencies across the country in developing policies and procedures for the handling of DNA evidence and witness identification. He also is an active member of the Police Executives Research Forum, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the National Tactical Officers Association. To view his résumé, visit the [City's website](#).

According to Bonfield, each candidate has had extensive and successful law enforcement careers, demonstrating not only great leadership, but also perseverance of justice during challenging moments in their careers. “While each candidate was vetted through a thorough background investigation, I can assure the public that throughout the assessment process, they consistently demonstrated a commitment to police professionalism, transparency, accountability, and a positive relationship with the communities they serve,” he said.

Deputy Chief Davis was exonerated after being discharged in 2008 when she was falsely accused of a cover up during a scandal in the City of Atlanta Police Department, and Major Smathers withstood significant pressure in 2013 as he investigated the circumstances surrounding the fatal shooting of Jonathan Ferrell and recommended a fellow officer be charged.

The Durham community will have an opportunity to meet Davis and Smathers when they participate in a moderated community forum on Wednesday, April 6 from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in City Hall Council Chambers, 101 City Hall Plaza. Residents are urged to submit questions to be asked during the forum beginning Tuesday, March 29 until 5 p.m. on Monday, April 4 in one of the following ways:

- Email: PublicAffairs@DurhamNC.gov
- Twitter: <http://Twitter.com/CityofDurhamNC>
- Facebook: <http://www.Facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC>
- Durham One Call: (919) 560-1200

During the forum, the finalists will answer as many of the submitted questions as possible. Audience members at the forum will also have the opportunity to submit written questions, which will be addressed as time permits. Following the question-and-answer session, the public will have a chance to meet each candidate individually.

Residents who are unable to attend the forum can watch it in a variety of ways. The forum will be televised live on [Durham Television Network \(DTN\)](#), which is available on Time Warner Cable channel 8 and AT&T U-verse channel 99, on [DTN's live stream](#) from the City's website, and live streamed from the [City's Facebook page](#). Upon conclusion of the forum, it will be re-broadcast on DTN and available for on-demand viewing from the [City's YouTube channel](#).

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